Office of Legislative Oversight
Memorandum Report
2002-2

Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

People who cannot drive confront problems accomplishing many everyday routines. These problems can be especially acute for seniors who no longer drive and for people with disabilities. They may be exacerbated for people living on limited incomes. Left unresolved, a lack of mobility can lead to isolation, a decline in health, and a reduced quality of life.

This Office of Legislative Oversight report on transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities in Montgomery County found that:

- Seniors and people with disabilities rely on different means of transport, including family and friends, volunteers, private service providers, and publicly funded services.

- The Council appropriated $3.7 million of County funds in FY 02 for an array of transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities, including $2.5 million for curb-to-curb transportation, $806,000 for fixed route Ride-On transportation, $211,000 for assisted/escorted transportation, and $186,000 for transportation information services.

- County-supported programs augment a set of State-funded transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. The State funds Metro fixed route bus and rail service, which offers reduced fares and accessible buses and trains. The State also funds MetroAccess and Medicaid Transportation ($3.1 million in FY 02), and supports the County Ride On's Call-N-Ride program ($364K in FY 02).

- Formal assessments that quantify the unmet transportation needs of seniors and people with disabilities are limited and insufficient for making data-driven policy and budget decisions.

Because a single department does not deliver all transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities, policy and budget decision-making on this issue has been dispersed among several County departments and Council Committees. To enhance Council decision-making about this array of services, OLO recommends that the Council:

- Approach funding decisions on transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities within the context of all relevant transportation services available;

- Articulate the Council's goals and priorities for future funding of transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities; and

- Pursue additional information about transportation needs among seniors and people with disabilities, for use in budget decision-making and goal and priority-setting.

VI. Introduction

A. Authority

Council Resolution No. 14-965, FY 2002 Work Program of the Office of Legislative Oversight, adopted July 24, 2001.

B. Methodology

Jennifer Kimball, Legislative Analyst and Benjamin Stutz, Research Assistant in the Office of Legislative Oversight, conducted this project. OLO collected information through interviews with staff in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT), and the Department of Recreation. OLO also interviewed private and non-profit transportation providers in Montgomery County.

C. Scope and Purpose

Mobility is one of the key contributors to quality of life. We expect to be able to go where we please when we please whether it be a daily trip to work, a weekly trip to the grocery store, or an occasional trip to visit a friend. In most of America, the private automobile is the most common mode of transportation. People who own cars and drive enjoy an extensive system of roads and highways, and a high degree of personal mobility.

Finding an alternative means to get around can be a problem. Fixed public transit routes cannot match the coverage and convenience of the private automobile. Private taxis may be prohibitively expensive. Walking and bicycling may not be feasible in communities designed for automobile transportation.

People who do not drive confront mobility problems in accomplishing many of their everyday routines. These problems can be especially acute for seniors who no longer drive and for people with disabilities. These problems may be exacerbated for people living on limited incomes. Left unresolved, a lack of mobility may lead to isolation, a decline in health, and a reduced quality of life.

This OLO report describes transportation options for seniors and people with disabilities in Montgomery County. The report focuses on the FY 2002 County-funded transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. It also presents the limited information that is available about the need for transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. The report concludes with recommendations to help the Council make more comprehensive effective and efficient decisions in this area.

D. Organization

The report is organized as follows:

Part II. County-funded Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities identifies the County dollars appropriated in FY 2002, the types of service provided, the populations served, the service providers, and any workload and performance data available.

Part III. Selected Non-County Funded Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities describes some of the non-County funded services available in Montgomery County. While these programs do not use County funds, they are an integral part of the system of transportation services in the County.

Part IV. The Need for Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities includes data on seniors and people with disabilities, and their transportation needs. Although formal, statistically significant assessments of need are limited, this part of the report describes information collected through interviews with service providers and informal surveys of transportation needs.

Part V. Summary of Findings presents highlights of the FY 2002 County-funded transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities.

Part VI. Recommendations presents three recommendations for Council consideration.

E. Definitions

Curb-to-curb Transportation – Transportation that does not include assistance to and from the vehicle, or in and out of the vehicle. In general, curb-to-curb transportation only requires the driver to pull up to the curb, sidewalk, driveway, or parking lot. However, drivers must tie down wheelchairs/scooters and operate wheelchair lifts as people with disabilities embark and exit the vehicle.

Assisted/Escorted Transportation – Transportation that includes the driver assisting the passenger to and from the vehicle, and in and out of the vehicle. Assisted/escorted transportation may also include the driver accompanying and helping the passenger at their destinations, e.g., walk around their destination, put on and remove a coat, check in at a medical appointment, carry packages.

5

F. Acknowledgements

II.   County-Funded Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities

In FY 2002, the Council appropriated approximately $3.7 million County dollars for transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. County funded services include fixed route transportation, curb-to-curb transportation, assisted/escorted transportation, and transportation information and referral services. Table 1, beginning on page 8 summarizes information about each County-funded program. Graph 1 shows the FY 2002 County funding by type of transportation service. In sum:

- $2.5 million funds curb-to-curb services, including $1.8 million for Call-N-Ride,
- $800,000 funds fixed route Ride On transportation for seniors and people with disabilities through reduced fares and accessible buses,
- $211,000 funds assisted/escorted transportation, and
- $186,000 funds transportation information, referral and assistance services.

Graph 1 – County Funding for Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities by Type of Service, FY 2002
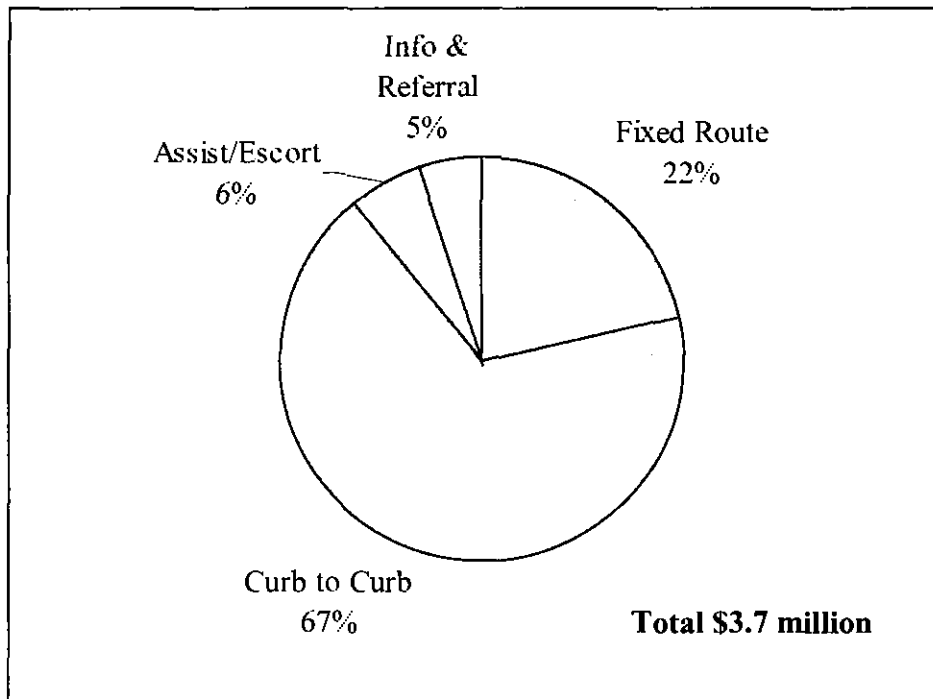
Table 1 - Summary of County-funded Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Program/ Service Provider	FY 2002 County Dollars	First Year Funded	Purpose	Cost to User	# of Rides and/or # Served in FY01	Eligibility	Area of Service
Fixed Route Public Transportation - $806,250							
Ride On Department of Public Works and Transportation	$806,250[1]	1975	Wheelchair accessible public transportation with discounted fares for seniors and people with disabilities	Reduced Fare $.50 per ride	375,000 rides using the reduced fare for seniors and people with disabilities	All residents with disabilities and seniors 65+ quality for the reduced fare	County-Wide
Curb-To-Curb Transportation - $2,505,408							
Call-N-Ride Department of Public Works and Transportation	$1,810,098	FY 1985	Monthly coupon books worth $100 for taxi and wheelchair van transportation	$5.25, $17.50, or $26.25 per coupon book, based on income	94,575 one-way trips; 2,847 certified users	Seniors 68+ and people with disabilities certified by a health care professional; Max annual income of $20,000	Montgomery County, Prince George's County, District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia
Program Transportation First Transit (DPWT contract)	$645,310	FY 1980	Transportation for seniors to senior centers, community centers, and grocery stores	$.50 per ride, waived for riders with Medical Assistance	47,667 round trips	Seniors 55+ and living within the designated boundaries around each Center	Within designated boundaries around 11 senior and community centers
Transportation to Springfield Hospital Mental Health Association (DHHS Contract)	$50,000	FY 1988	Transportation between Montgomery County and Springfield Hospital for discharge, entry, visits, or program participation	None	524 one-way trips: 392 riders		Pick-up points in Wheaton, Olney, Gaithersburg, Bethesda, Silver Spring

[1] The Council appropriated $57.9 million for Ride On in FY 2002. The $806,250 represents the 375,000 riders that use the reduced fare for seniors and people with disabilities in FY 2001 times an average cost per passenger of $2.15.

Table 1 Continued

Program/ Service Provider	FY 2002 County Dollars	First Year Funded	Purpose	Cost to User	# of Rides and/or # Served	Eligibility	Area of Service
Assisted/Escorted Transportation - $210,957							
Assisted/Escorted Transportation Allied Silver Spring Interfaith Services for Seniors Today (DHHS Contract)	$58,860	FY 01	Transportation to medical appointments and other errands	None	2,172 round trips; 432 clients	Live within ASSISST service area; 62+ years of age	Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Wheaton, Burtonsville, Spencerville
Assisted/Escorted Transportation Senior Interfaith Resources Center (DHHS contract)	$46,820	FY 00	Transportation to medical appointments, grocery stores and other errands	None	1,120 one-way trips; 122 clients	Live within SIRC service area	Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Cabin John, Potomac, Kensington, Garrett Park
Transportation for Victory Housing Recreational Activities Victory Housing (DHHS Contract)	$30,000	FY 02: one time only	Transportation to recreational activities	None	0 As of 2/02 Victory Housing had not implemented this program or spent any funds.	Victory Housing residents	
Assisted/Escorted Transportation for Adult Foster Care Clients Winter Growth (DHHS Contract)	$5,277		Transportation to medical appointments	None	68 rides; 20 clients	Adult Foster Care clients of DHHS' Aging and Disability Services	County-Wide
Assisted/Escorted Transportation (DHHS Contract)	$70,000[2]	FY 02	DHHS has not implemented this initiative yet and no funds have been spent. Specific information is not available at this time.				

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[2] The Council appropriated $90,000. As part of the FY 02 savings plan, DHHS reduced the funds to $70,000.

Table 1 Continued

Program/ Service Provider	FY 2002 County Dollars	First Year Funded	Purpose	Cost to User	# of Rides and/or # Served	Eligibility	Area of Service
Transportation Information and Assistance - $185,812							
Connect-A-Ride Jewish Council for the Aging (DHHS Contract)	$90,963	FY 97	Transportation information/referral and outreach	None	619 telephone contacts	Seniors 50+ years of age	County-Wide
Information and Outreach Services Department of Public Works and Transportation	$60,045[3]		Transportation information and outreach	None	442 telephone contacts between 6/01 and 11/01	Seniors and people with disabilities	County-Wide
Information and Assistance Unit Aging and Disability Services, DHHS	$34,804[4]		Transportation information and assistance	None	1,582 telephone contacts	Seniors and people with disabilities	County-Wide

Grand Total $3,708,427

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[3] This is the cost of a transit coordinator that provides information, outreach, and coordination services for seniors and people with disabilities full time. Other DPWT staff provides these services as part of their activities.
[4] The Council appropriated $909,040 for the Information and Assistance Unit in FY 02. The $34,804 figure represents a $22 average cost per Information Line call times 1,582 telephone calls seeking transportation information and assistance in FY 2001.

10

A. Fixed Route Public Transportation

The Council appropriated approximately $57.9 million in FY 2002 for Ride On fixed route public transportation. Of the FY 2002 total, approximately $39 million represent County funds. In FY 2001, 375,000 rides were taken with the reduced fare for seniors and people with disabilities. That represents approximately 1.7% of the total 21.7 million Ride On trips. At an average cost per passenger of $2.15, rides using the reduced fare for seniors and people with disabilities account for approximately $806,000 of the total Ride-On appropriation.

The 336-bus Ride On fleet will have 322 wheelchair accessible buses by May 2002. To assure an accessible bus, DPWT recommends users call DPWT by 3:00 p.m. the day before the trip to request an accessible bus on a specific route. All Sunday Ride On service is wheelchair accessible. Ride On also provides a reduced fare of $.50 per ride for seniors 65 years and older and people with disabilities. Other factors that impact the accessibility of Ride On fixed route service, and reduce the need for other modes of transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, include:

- Sidewalk curb cuts and safe crosswalks leading to bus stops,
- Working order of the wheelchair lift,
- Announcements of bus stops for individuals who are blind, and
- Availability of benches at bus stops.

B. Curb-to-Curb Transportation

The Council appropriated approximately $2.5 million County dollars in FY 2002 for three curb-to-curb transportation programs, including:

- $1.8 million to the Department of Public Works and Transportation for Call-N-Ride, and
- $695,000 to the Department of Health and Human Services for transportation to senior/community centers ($645,310) and transportation to Springfield Hospital ($50,000).

1. Call-N-Ride

In FY 2002, the Council appropriated $1.8 million in DPWT's budget for a contract with JL Services to administer the Call-N-Ride program. Call-N-Ride, developed in 1985, subsidizes transportation for seniors and people with disabilities via reduced rate coupon books redeemable for curb-to-curb transportation by local taxi companies. The State contribution to Call-N-Ride totaled $364,370 in FY 02. Revenue from fees charged for the coupon books totaled approximately $200,000 in FY 01.

DPWT contracts with Action, Barwood and Regency taxi companies to accept the Call-N-Ride coupons. Call-N-Ride users call and arrange transportation with one of these three companies. There are no restrictions on the purpose of the trips, and

individuals can travel anywhere in Montgomery County, Prince George's County, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia. Taxi drivers are not required to assist riders during the trip. Individuals can use the coupons to pay for the entire cost of the trip, or combine the coupons with cash to pay for the trip.

Eligible seniors must be 68 years or older, and people with disabilities must provide a certification of their disability from a health care professional. Users must have an annual income of $20,000 or less for a family of one. DPWT reports that the majority of the users are very low-income females, with an average age of 75 years.

Participants may purchase up to two coupon books per month worth $50 each. The cost of the coupon book is based on income. Table 2 shows the income levels and coupon book prices. According to DPWT, 93% of all coupon books sold in FY 2001 were sold for $5.25 each, indicating that the majority of the users have incomes below $14,000.

Table 2 – Call-N-Ride Coupon Book Fees

Income (one person household)	Coupon Book Fee	Percent of Total Books Sold in FY 01
Up to $14,000	$5.25	93%
$14,001 - $17,000	$17.50	5%
$17,001 - $20,000	$26.25	2%

Table 3 summarizes data on FY 2001 participation in the Call-N-Ride Program. DPWT data indicates that 2,847 County residents were certified to use Call-N-Ride at the end of FY 2001. The certified users purchased a total of 32,329 coupon books during FY 2001, or approximately 11 books per certified user. The data also shows 100% of the coupons sold were redeemed for rides. Individuals used Call-N-Ride coupons to take 94,575 one-way trips in FY 2001, or 33 trips per certified user, on average.

Table 3 – Participation in the Call-N-Ride Program, FY 2001

Participation Data	Number
Certified Call-N-Ride Users (as of 6/30/01)	2,847
Coupon Books Sold	32,329
One Way Rides	94,575
Coupon Book Redemption Rate	100%

2. Program Transportation

In FY 2002, the Council appropriated $645,310 in DHHS' Aging and Disability Services budget for Program Transportation. Program Transportation, implemented more than 20 years ago, provides transportation during the mid-day from seniors' homes to senior centers, community centers, and grocery stores. DPWT manages a contract with First Transit to provide the service via Ride On buses. DHHS coordinates trips to grocery stores, and the Department of Recreation coordinates trips to senior and community centers.

Seniors 55 years and older are eligible. Users pay $.50 per one-way trip, but users with a Medical Assistance card ride for free. During FY 2001, Program Transportation provided 47,667 trips. Approximately 68% of the trips were to senior and community centers and 31% were to grocery stores. Most of the Program Transportation users are frail, unable to drive, and 70 years of age and older. Less than 1% of the trips served individuals in wheelchairs.

Senior and Community Centers

Program Transportation currently serves all five County senior centers and six neighborhood community centers, including:

- Damascus Senior Center,
- Gaithersburg Up-County Senior Center,
- Holiday Park Senior Center,
- Long Branch Senior Center,
- Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center,
- Clara Barton Community Center,
- East County Community Center,
- Germantown Community Centers,
- Owens Park Recreation Center,
- Potomac Community Center, and
- Ross Boddy Community Center.

The program also transports senior residents of the following five Housing Opportunities Commission facilities to the nearest senior center: Arcola House, Elizabeth House, Holly Hall, Waverly House, and Leafy House.

Seniors access Program Transportation by giving their name and address to a senior/community center director. DPWT and Department of Recreation representatives determine if the request can be accommodated based on:

- Whether the individual resides within the boundaries of a defined geographic area of the senior center,
- Keeping the bus ride under 1 hour; and
- A bus capacity of 23 riders.

The map on page 16 shows the locations of each senior and community center and the geographic area served by Program Transportation. Department of Recreation staff indicate that they receive requests for service that they cannot accommodate. Most of the unfilled requests come from seniors who live outside of the Program Transportation boundary around the senior/community center. Department of Recreation staff also report a need for transportation to senior programs for Bethesda residents. The Commission on Aging's FY 2003 Budget Priorities recommends adding funds to:

- Increase transportation to the Germantown Community Center and the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, and
- Provide transportation from Bethesda to the Holiday Park Senior Center and Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center.

Grocery Stores

Program Transportation also provides weekly rides to grocery stores from 24 rental housing properties that house large numbers of low income seniors and people with disabilities. Table 4 lists the properties served.

Table 4 – Rental Properties Served by Program Transportation Grocery Shopping Trips

Bethesda	Silver Spring
• Earl and Byron Manor	• Colesville Towers
• Chelsea Towers	• Colespring Plaza
• Lakeview Towers	• Springvale Apartments
• Waverly House	• Georgian Towers
• Battery Lane Apartments	• Elizabeth House
• Topaz House	• Leafy House
Gaithersburg	• Hildarose Apartments
• Londonderry Towers	• Inwood House
• Willows Apartments	**Rockville**
• Forest Oaks Towers	• Rock Creek High Rise
• Western Upper Montgomery Community Center	**Kensington**
	• Rebecca House
Takoma Park	**Sandy Spring**
• Takoma Towers	• Friends House Complex
• Piney Branch Road Apartments	
• Maple Ave Apartments	

Mini-Trips

The Department of Recreation also coordinates a mini trip once per month or once every two months for Program Transportation users. The four to six hour bus trips take seniors to places of interest to enhance quality of life, and cultural and social

14

exchange. Examples of mini trip destinations include the Smithsonian, Inner Harbor, and Lakeforest Mall. The Commission on Aging's FY 2003 Budget Priorities recommends adding funds to guarantee that each senior/community center has one mini-trip per month.

3. Mental Health Association

In FY 2002, the Council appropriated $50,000 to DHHS[5] for a contract with the Mental Health Association (MHA) to provide transportation to and from Springfield Hospital for clients and their families. MHA is designated as an entity for non-competitive contract award for this transportation service in FY 2002. DHHS began contracting with MHA for this service in FY 1988. The County dollars fund the driver, program director, and operating expenses.

The program provides free van transportation for County residents discharged from Springfield Hospital Center, returning to Springfield, or participating in rehabilitation services at Springfield. Families can also use the service to travel to Springfield for visits. MHA transports two times per day on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

The MHA van makes stops in Wheaton, Olney, Gaithersburg, Bethesda, and two locations in Silver Spring. MHA and DHHS established the route and stops five years ago. MHA's contract with the County requires the van driver to go to every stop during each trip. MHA staff reports that few individuals use some of the stops on the current route. As a result, MHA and DHHS anticipate adjusting the route to add a stop at the Montgomery County Crisis Center and remove stops that clients do not use.

Table 5 provides data on the number of riders served between FY 1999 and FY 2001. The data indicates that the number of riders decreased approximately 28% during the period. During FY 2001, the MHA van served 392 riders. The number of riders per month ranged from 18 in January to 89 in June. The majority of the 392 riders, 66%, traveled for visits to Springfield. Approximately 20% of the riders were returning to Springfield and 14% were traveling back to the County after discharge from Springfield.

Table 5 – Mental Health Association Transportation, FY99-FY01

Fiscal Year	Total Riders
FY 1999	544
FY 2000	580
FY 2001	392

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[5] Mental Health Care Service Agency

**CURB-TO-CURB TRANSPORTATION –
PROGRAM
TRANSPORTATION**

● DENOTES
SENIOR/COMMUNITY
CENTER

✱ The City of Rockville funds
transportation for City residents
to the Rockville Senior Center.

Source: Geographic Information Systems, DIST

A   20896 - Garrett Park
B   20892 - NIH
C   20889 - NNMC
D   20894 - National Library
of Medicine

20707
(Laurel, MD)

20868
Spencerville

20862
Brinklow

20861
Ashton

21797
(Woodbine, MD)

21771
(Mt. Airy, MD)

20833
(Brookeville)
Brookeville

20832
Olney

20906
Aspen Hill

20905
Colesville

20904
Colesville

20902
Wheaton

Silver Spring

20910

20882
Gaithersburg

20879
Gaithersburg

20877
Gaithersburg

20878
Gaithersburg

20871
Clarksburg

20872
Damascus

20841
Boyds

20837
Poolesville

20838
Beallsville

20842
Dickerson

20833
Rockville

20852
Rockville

20812
Glen Echo

20818
Cabin John

20817
Bethesda

20816
Bethesda

Potomac

C. Assisted/Escorted Transportation

The Council appropriated $210,957 in FY 2002 for five assisted/escorted transportation programs. In sum:

- 33% ($70,000) of the County dollars fund an FY 2002 DHHS initiative to provide additional assisted/escorted transportation in the County. The initiative has not been implemented to date.
- 28% ($58,860) fund transportation to medical appointments and errands through Allied Silver Spring Interfaith Services for Seniors Today,
- 22% ($46,820) fund transportation to medical appointments and errands through the Seniors' Interfaith Resource Center, Inc.,
- 14% ($30,000) fund transportation to recreational activities for Victory Housing residents,
- 3% ($5,277) fund transportation to medical appointments for DHHS Adult Foster Care clients.

The Council also appropriated $30,000 to DHHS in FY 2002 to determine the general feasibility of establishing an independent transportation network like the model operating in Portland, Maine. Descriptions of Portland's program are attached at ©1 and ©2. DHHS awarded a contract to the Independent Transportation Network Associates, the organization that operates Portland's system, to conduct the preliminary feasibility study. DHHS expects the study to be completed during the spring of 2002.

1. FY 2002 DHHS Assisted/Escorted Transportation Initiative

The Council appropriated $90,000 in FY 2002 for a new initiative to provide additional assisted/escorted transportation for seniors and people with disabilities in Montgomery County. As part of the FY 2002 Savings Plan, DHHS reduced the amount to $70,000. DHHS had not implemented this initiative and no funds have been spent. The Department submitted an open solicitation for private providers to transport seniors and people with disabilities who need assistance during their trip. A few providers have responded. Aging and Disability Services' Information and Assistance Unit will field calls for service and coordinate the rides with the service providers. DHHS will target people not served by existing assisted/escorted transportation services.

2. Allied Silver Spring Interfaith Services for Seniors Today (ASSISST)

In FY 2002, the Council appropriated $58,860 to DHHS for a contract with Allied Silver Spring Interfaith Services for Seniors Today (ASSISST) for assisted/escorted transportation services. ASSISST is designated as an entity for non-competitive contract award for this transportation service in FY 2002. DHHS began contracting with ASSISST for transportation services in FY 2001. The County dollars fund staff and operating expenses.

ASSISST is a non profit organization that uses volunteers to provide free support services for seniors in Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Wheaton, Burtonsville, and Spencerville. Assisted/escorted transportation represents approximately 90% of the services provided by ASSISST. To be eligible, seniors must:

- Be at least 62 years of age;
- Live within the ASSISST service area, and
- Request the ride at least two weeks in advance of the trip[6].

The map on page 21 identifies the zip code areas served by ASSISST.

ASSISST provides transportation through volunteers, most of whom are seniors themselves. ASSISST has 60 volunteer drivers, with approximately 35 available at any given time. The volunteers use their own cars, with no reimbursement for their expenses. ASSISST provides driver training and insurance. The volunteer driver helps the client to and from the vehicle, and provides other necessary assistance during the trip (e.g., removing coat, settling the rider in a waiting room, carrying packages). ASSISST staff try to consistently assign volunteers to the same clients in order to encourage a relationship between the two. Staff report that volunteer drivers often provide additional, undocumented support services to the individuals that they transport.

Seniors typically learn about ASSISST through word of mouth, the Connect-A-Ride program (see page 23), Aging and Disability Services' Information and Assistance Unit (see page 26), hospitals, and home care providers. ASSISST provided 2,172 round trips in FY 01, for $27 per round trip. ASSISST served 432 different individuals during FY 2001.

The majority of the trips are to medical appointments. ASSISST reports that it usually meets all of the transportation requests submitted within two weeks of the travel date. ASSISST meets approximately 80% of the requests received within one week of the travel date. With less than one-week notice, ASSISST only accommodates 20% of the requests. If it cannot meet the callers' needs, staff refers the caller to another provider (e.g., DPWT's Call-N-Ride, the Jewish Social Service Agency, cab companies) or places them on a waiting list.

ASSISST reports that the majority of the clients are female and live alone. Tables 6 and 7 (page 18) indicate that the majority of the seniors served are between 70 and 89 years of age and have extremely low incomes. ASSISST staff also reports that many clients are very frail, often confused, and frequently need assistance during the trip. ASSISST does not serve individuals in wheelchairs. They also do not serve individuals who need five days per week transportation to medical appointments (e.g., for dialysis or cancer treatment). In some cases, volunteers choose not to transport people with mental health and behavioral problems.

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[6] Although ASSISST prefers two weeks notice, rides can sometimes be accommodated with less notice. Clients that cannot be accommodated for the requested ride are placed on a waiting list

Table 6 – Age of ASSISST Clients, December 2001

Age	Up to 69	70-79	80-89	90+	Unknown
Percent of Clients	7%	32%	38%	10%	12%

Table 7 – Income Levels of New ASSISST Clients, FY 2001

Income Level for a One Person Household	Extremely Low Less Than $16,550	Low $16,551-$27,550	Moderate $27,551-$33,450	Other
Percent of New Clients	59%	31%	6%	3%

According to ASSISST, clients express a need for transportation services that do not require significant advance notice. ASSISST reports transportation services are significantly limited by the number of volunteer drivers. If more volunteer drivers were available, ASSISST would require less advance notice from clients.

3. Seniors' Interfaith Resource Center, Inc. (SIRC)

In FY 2002, the Council appropriated $46,820 in the Department of Health and Human Services for a contract with the Seniors' Interfaith Resource Center, Inc. (SIRC) for assisted/escorted car transportation.[7] SIRC is designated as an entity for non-competitive contract award for this transportation service in FY 2002. DHHS began contracting with SIRC for transportation services in FY 2000. The County dollars fund portions of the Executive Director and Administrative Assistant salaries.

SIRC is a non-profit organization serving seniors in Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Cabin John, Potomac, Kensington, and Garrett Park. To be eligible, seniors must:

- Live within the SIRC service area, and
- Request the ride at least one week in advance of the trip.

The map on page 21 illustrates the SIRC service area.

SIRC provides free assisted/escorted transportation services through volunteer drivers. Volunteers transport the seniors to medical appointments, grocery stores, and other locations (e.g., church, post office, and beauty parlor), with priority given to medical appointments. Like ASSISST, the volunteer driver helps the client to and from the vehicle, and provides other necessary assistance during the trip (e.g., removing coat, settling the rider in a waiting room, carrying packages). Volunteers use their own cars and receive no reimbursement.

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[7] The County also provides office space at no cost for SIRC at the Holiday Park Senior Center.

SIRC has 20 volunteer drivers, with approximately 10 who are available to respond to call-in requests at any given time. SIRC reports that most of the volunteer drivers are seniors, and that most volunteers drive 3-4 times during any month that they are available. In addition to these volunteer drivers, a number of SIRC's friendly visitor volunteers provide escort transportation services to their clients.

During FY 2001, SIRC provided 1,120 one-way escorted transportation trips for $42 per one-way trip. SIRC served 122 different seniors during FY 2001. Table 8 below shows the number of trips by destination and the number of individuals who took each kind of trip. A medical appointment was the destination for 75% of the trips.

Table 8 – SIRC Assisted/Escorted Transportation Workload Data, FY 2001

Destination	Number of One-way Trips	Number of Persons Served
Medical	844	107
Grocery	69	18
Other Errands/Outings	207	27
Total	1,120	152[8]

Seniors' Interfaith Resource Center, Inc., December 2001.

According to SIRC staff, the typical client is a white female, 75 years or older, who lives alone, is socially isolated, and has no family nearby. Approximately half of SIRC's assisted/escorted transportation clients require assistance to and from the vehicle and/or during the trip.

SIRC reports that it meets approximately 95% of the transportation requests submitted within a week of the travel date. Requests submitted less than one week before the travel date are much harder to accommodate. If SIRC cannot meet a caller's needs, it refers them to another provider that serves the caller's geographic area (e.g., Bethesda HELP, Rockville FISH, ASSISST, private providers).

SIRC usually does not serve individuals in wheelchairs or people with mental health and behavioral problems. It cannot serve requests for five day per week transportation to medical appointments (e.g., for dialysis or cancer treatment), although it has transported individuals two days per week, on occasion. Like ASSISST, SIRC reports that the number of volunteer drivers limits the number of seniors served. SIRC also indicated that clients express a need for transportation services that do not require seven days advance notice.

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[8] Since several seniors took more than one kind of trip, the number of persons served is more than the number of unduplicated individuals receiving the service.

ASSISTED/ESCORTED
TRANSPORTATION –
SIRC AND ASSIST SERVICE
AREAS

Source: Geographic Information Systems, DIST

21

4. Victory Housing

Victory Housing is a 501(c)(3) corporation affiliated with the Archdiocese of Washington. Victory Housing provides affordable housing and related social services to low- and moderate-income senior citizens and others with special needs. It currently operates five communities in Montgomery County, including assisted and independent living.

In FY 2002, the Council appropriated $30,000 of one-time funds to DHHS for transportation services for Victory Housing Inc. The funds were awarded on a one-time basis for Victory housing to lease a van and hire a driver to provide free transportation for Victory Housing residents to recreational activities (e.g., trips to museums, parks, and shopping malls). As of February 1, 2002, Victory Housing had not used the County funds. It hopes to lease a van and hire a driver soon. Victory Housing is designated as an entity for non-competitive contract award for this transportation service in FY 2002.

5. Winter Growth Inc.

Winter Growth Inc. provides support services for older adults, including adult day care, assisted housing, and respite care. Clients receive assisted/escorted transportation to Winter Growth programs/services. When vehicles are not used for Winter Growth clients, Winter Growth transports DHHS' Aging and Disability Services Adult Foster Care clients to medical appointments. Aging and Disability Services purchases vouchers for Winter Growth transportation for Adult Foster Care clients. Winter Growth transportation services cost the County $20 per hour for pick-up and mileage, and $7 per hour for the time spent with the client in the physicians office.

Adult Foster Care use of Winter Growth services fluctuates each year depending on the needs of the clients. In FY 2001, DHHS transportation spent approximately $3,200 for 68 Winter Growth rides for 20 people. The average cost per round trip in FY 2001 totaled $47. DHHS expects to spend $5,277 on Winter Growth escorted transportation services in FY 2002.

D. Information and Assistance Services

The Council appropriated $185,812 in FY 2002 for programs that provide transportation information, referral, assistance, and outreach. In sum:

- $91,045 funds a DHHS contract with the Jewish Council for the Aging to operate the Connect-A-Ride program,
- $60,045 supports the Department of Public Works and Transportation information and outreach services for seniors and people with disabilities,
- $34,804 supports DHHS' Aging and Disability Information and Assistance unit services regarding transportation.

1. Connect-A-Ride

In FY 2002, the Council appropriated $90,963 to DHHS for a contract with the Jewish Council for the Aging to operate the Connect-A-Ride program. The Jewish Council for the Aging (JCA) is designated as an entity for non-competitive contract award for Connect-A-Ride in FY 2002. The County has been funding Connect-A-Ride for six years. The County dollars fund operating expenses (e.g., staff development, travel, rent, supplies), and portions of eight positions (Assistant Director, Supervisor, Program Manager, three Information Specialists, Accountant, and Accounting Support).

Helpline

The Connect-A-Ride staff collect and disseminate information to seniors and people with disabilities seeking transportation services throughout Montgomery County. JCA staff and volunteers maintain a database of transportation providers and operate a free helpline (301-738-3252). Connect-A-Ride staff answer questions, refer callers to appropriate transportation providers, and help them access transportation services (e.g., help them complete the MetroAccess application).

The Connect-A-Ride database currently includes 210 public, private, and volunteer transportation providers in Montgomery County. The database includes specific information about each provider, such as address, phone number, rates, hours of operation, distance they will travel/geographic areas they serve, type of transportation service provided, wheelchair accessibility, eligibility requirements, intake procedure, and languages spoken.

JCA staff/volunteers refer each caller to at least three providers from the Connect-A-Ride database. They usually refer each caller to a combination of types of providers (e.g., private, volunteer, and public), to allow the caller to determine what type of service best meets their needs. They also instruct callers to call back if none of the referrals meet their transportation needs. JCA staff also makes follow up calls to helpline users to determine whether the individual's transportation needs were met, and mails a written survey to Connect-A-Ride callers.

The majority of callers request information about transportation to medical appointments (including dental, rehabilitation, and dialysis visits). In addition, Connect-A-Ride receives requests for information about transportation to grocery shopping, senior centers, other recreational/socialization programs, and visits to loved ones and friends in hospitals and nursing homes.

JCA reports that callers increasingly seek services that include assistance to and from the vehicle and during the trip. Between July and December 2001, Connect-A-Ride referred 52% of the callers to private fee-for-service providers that provide assistance during the trip. Connect-A-Ride referred approximately 20% of the callers to volunteer

services, which usually provide assistance during the trip. Another 20% were to curb-to-curb transportation providers that do not provide assistance.

During FY 2001, 623 Montgomery County residents called the Connect-A-Ride helpline (52 per month, on average). JCA made follow up calls and mailed surveys to all users to determine whether the referrals provided by Connect-A-Ride resulted in transportation that met the callers needs. According to JCA, approximately 40% of the callers referred between July and November 2001 reported receiving transportation from a Connect-A-Ride referral.

Tables 9 through 11 describe the characteristics of the Connect-A-Ride callers. JCA designed the program to serve people 50 years and over, but reports that no one who calls is denied assistance. The typical Connect-A-Ride caller is a female, between 70 and 89 years of age, who lives alone, often with no local family. JCA data indicate that approximately 40% of the FY 2001 Connect-A-Ride callers have incomes below $20,000. JCA reports that during FY 2001, 21% of the helpline calls came from Up-County residents and 79% from Down-County residents.

Table 9 – Age of Connect-A-Ride Callers, FY 2001

Age	#	%
Under 50	18	3%
50-59	38	6%
60-69	80	13%
70-79	175	29%
80-89	243	41%
90 & Over	42	7%
Total	**596***	**100%**

Source: Jewish Council on Aging, January 2001.
*27 callers did not report their age.

Table 10 – Marital Status of Connect-A-Ride Callers, FY 2001

Marital Status	#	%
Married	187	33%
Single	48	8%
Divorced	53	9%
Widowed	281	49%
Total	**569***	**100%**

Source: Jewish Council on Aging, January 2001.
*54 callers did not report their marital status.

Table 11 - Income of Connect-A-Ride Callers, FY 2001

Income	#	%
Under 10,000	89	17%
11,000-19,000	121	24%
20,000-30,000	110	21%
30,000 & Above	196	38%
Total	**516***	**100%**

Source: Jewish Council on Aging, January 2001.
*107 callers did not report their income.

Outreach and Education

Connect-A Ride staff also conducts community outreach and education. Staff distributed over 8,500 flyers about Connect-A-Ride to libraries, senior centers, senior housing, senior expos, health fairs, and senior services providers/professionals. Staff conducted 36 presentations at senior housing facilities, health fairs, senior centers, and other community centers during FY 2001, some in conjunction with staff from Montgomery County's Department of Public Works and Transportation. Staff distribute information about transportation programs, help identify appropriate transportation options, and help individuals complete program applications. In addition, Connect-A-Ride staff encourage senior drivers to become volunteer drivers with one of the volunteer programs in the County.

JCA also provides targeted assistance as needed. For example, when the Red Cross stopped providing medical transportation services, Red Cross clients were referred to Connect-A-Ride for information about other providers. JCA also coordinates some special transportation services, such as transporting a group of seniors to a senior center for flu shots.

Connect-A-Ride staff developed a Roundtable for Transportation Providers in January 2001. The Roundtable meets quarterly and includes representatives from 25 public, private, and non-profit transportation providers in Montgomery County. The list of participating organizations is attached at ©7. The Roundtable provides a forum to discuss existing services, new services, service gaps/needs, and other issues. During 2001, the group developed a sheet entitled "Tips to Follow When Using Taxi Services". It explains the best times to travel, safety tips, and the importance of tipping taxi drivers. Additionally, the Roundtable collaborated with the County's Volunteer Center to distribute a press release regarding recruitment of volunteer drivers.

2. Paratransit Information and Outreach Services, Department of Public Works and Transportation

DPWT's Paratransit Section provides information and outreach about transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. While a number of Paratransit staff conduct information and coordination services, one transit coordinator spends full time responding to inquiries from seniors and people with disabilities, conducting outreach to those populations, and coordinating with other transportation providers (e.g., MetroAccess). The cost of that position in FY 2002 totaled $60,045.

During FY 2001, the transit coordinator invested the majority of the time assisting MetroAccess users, and communicating with WMATA throughout the transition to a new MetroAccess contractor. The transit coordinator shifted more time to other information and outreach activities in FY 2002. In addition to coordination and outreach activities, DPWT Information and Assistance Services received 442 phone requests for information from seniors and people with disabilities between July and November 2001. Most callers request information about low cost transportation programs and services, and how to get approval to use MetroAccess.

In terms of outreach, DPWT staff visit low income housing facilities and senior centers to share information about Program Transportation, Call-N-Ride, and MetroAccess. DPWT staff works one on one with seniors and people with disabilities to identify appropriate transportation options. DPWT also works with the Motor Vehicle Administration to identify transportation options for seniors who lose their licenses, and works with WMATA to identify resources for individuals who no longer qualify for MetroAccess.

3. Information and Assistance Unit, Aging and Disability Services, DHHS

Aging and Disability Services' Information and Assistance Unit provides information and referral about all services for seniors and people with disabilities. According to DHHS, approximately 8% of the calls to the Information and Assistance Unit request information about transportation services. Information and Assistance Unit staff also help seniors and people with disabilities complete applications for MetroAccess and Call-N-Ride.

The dollars appropriated to the Information and Assistance Unit in FY 2002 totaled $909,040. In FY 2001, the Information and Assistance Unit staff received 1,582 inquiries about transportation services. With the average cost of a call to the Information Line at $22, inquiries about transportation services cost approximately $34,804 in FY 2001.

III. Selected Non-County-funded Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Some Montgomery County seniors and people with disabilities rely on Non-County funded transportation programs and providers. This part of the report describes some of the non-County-funded services and provides some context for understanding the County-funded programs. Table 12, beginning on page 28, summarizes the non-County-funded programs described in this report, including:

- State funded programs – Metro, MetroAccess, and MediTrans (Medicaid Transportation,
- City of Rockville programs – Call-N-Ride and Senior Center Buses,
- Non-Profit programs – HELP Organizations and Jewish Council for the Aging,
- Private fee-for-service programs – Wheelchair Mobile Transport and Mobile Care Limited.

A. Fixed Route Public Transportation

The State funds Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) service in Montgomery County. WMATA provides Metrorail service and fixed route bus service throughout the County. The Metrorail's Red Line provides the single largest mode of mass transportation in the County. Metro buses operate primarily on major transportation arteries in the County.

The WMATA system is designed to accommodate seniors and people with disabilities. For example,

- Employees receive training on the special needs of people with disabilities,
- Metrorail stations/trains have elevators, Braille signs, PA systems for announcements and door chimes, accessible farecard machines, wide entrance/exit gates for wheelchairs, and flashing lights to signal train arrival, and
- Approximately 70% of the Metro bus fleet are handicap accessible.

WMATA also offers reduced fares for seniors 65 years and older and people with disabilities who have a MetroSenior ID card, Metro Disabled ID card, or Medicare card. Those riders pay $.50 for a Metro bus ride, and can purchase special Metrorail farecards that deduct one half the regular fare for each trip (not to exceed $1.60).

27

Table 12 – Selected Non-County-funded Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Program/ Service Provider	Purpose	Cost to User	# of Rides and/or # Served	Eligibility	Area of Service
Fixed Route Public Transportation					
Metro WMATA (State funded)	Accessible fixed route bus and rail transportation with discounted fares for seniors and people with disabilities	Bus fare - $.50; Metrorail fare - half the regular fare	N/A	Seniors 65+ and people with disabilities, with a Metro Senior ID or Metro Disabled ID	Metropolitan Area
Curb-to-Curb Transportation					
MetroAccess WMATA (State funded)	Sedan, wheelchair lift equipped van, and private taxi transportation for any purpose	Rush hour - $2.20 per ride Non-rush hour - $1.80 per ride	18,254 trips in FY 01; 3,733 certified users as of Dec. 2001	Certified people with disabilities who are not able to use the regular transit system	Within ¾ of a mile of a Ride On or Metro bus fixed route
Meditrans (Medicaid Transportation) Department of Public Works and Transportation (State funded)	Wheelchair accessible van and private taxi transportation to medical appointments	None	52,459 one-way trips in FY 01	Individuals unable to use regular transportation, with no other means of transportation, and eligible to receive Medicaid benefits[9]	Washington Metropolitan Region
Call-N-Ride City of Rockville	Monthly coupon books worth $25 for curb-to-curb taxi service	$3 to $18 per coupon book	1,380 coupon books sold annually	Rockville residents 60 years of age and older and people with a disability that prevents them from driving	Washington Metropolitan Region
Opportunity Grant Program Jewish Council for the Aging	Subsidies for taxi transportation to medical appoints, shopping, religious/cultural events, and visits to hospitals	None	20	One person household income below $40,799	Washington Metropolitan Region

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[9] Medicaid eligibility does not guarantee eligibility for Meditrans.

Table 12 Continued

Program/ Service Provider	Purpose	Cost to User	# of Rides and/or # Served	Eligibility	Area of Service
Assisted/Escorted Transportation					
Senior Buses City of Rockville	Transportation to the Rockville Senior Center, grocery stores and shopping malls	Trips to the Senior Center – no cost; Trips to the grocery store - $1.00 Trips to other shopping - $1.50	N/A	Rockville residents 60+ years of age	Rockville area
Assisted/Escorted Transportation Gaithersburg HELP	Transportation primarily to medical appointments	None	445 round trips FY 2001	Live within the Gaithersburg zip codes	Washington Metropolitan Region
Assisted/Escorted Transportation Western Upper Montgomery County HELP	Transportation primarily to medical appointments	None	140 round trips FY 2001	Live within the Poolesville, Beallsville, Barnesville, Dickerson, and Boyds zip codes	Washington Metropolitan Region
Wheelchair Mobile Transport	Private wheelchair accessible transportation	$110 per round trip, plus $1.50 per mile over 10 miles[10]	18,000 round trips annually		Baltimore-Washington region
Mobile Care Limited	Private wheelchair accessible transportation	$63-$100 per round trip, plus $2.00 per mile over 10 miles	4,300 trips annually (majority round trip)		Baltimore-Washington region

29

[10] Wheelchair Mobile Transport charges nursing home and Medicaid clients $63 per round trip, plus $1.00 for each mile over ten miles.

B. Curb-to-Curb

1. MetroAccess

The State of Maryland provided approximately $1.2 million for MetroAccess service in Montgomery County in FY 2002. To comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, MetroAccess provides curb-to-curb transit service to certified persons with disabilities who are not able to use the regular transit system. WMATA provides the MetroAccess fleet of sedans and wheelchair accessible vans, and determines client eligibility. WMATA contracts with Logisticare to manage the MetroAccess calls for service, scheduling, and operations. Montgomery County's Department of Public Works and Transportation receives detailed monthly reports on MetroAccess service in the County. DPWT also responds to questions from County residents about MetroAccess, and works with WMATA and Logisticare to ensure that the service meets County residents' needs.

Potential users complete a MetroAccess application, which must be certified by a health care professional. MetroAccess staff interview applicants, and an occupational therapist completes a functional assessment to determine the applicant's inability to use public transportation. It takes approximately 21 days to process an application.

Table 13 indicates that there were 3,733 certified MetroAccess users in Montgomery County as of December 2001. MetroAccess denied eligibility for three applicants in FY 2001. [11] The Commission on People with Disabilities reports that some seniors and people with disabilities can use fixed route transportation some days, but not others. They argue that some health conditions make it difficult to prove, through a one time functional assessment, whether an individual can use regular fixed route service.

Table 13 – MetroAccess Use

	Number
Certified users as of 12/01	3,733
Trips requested – FY 01	293,701
Trips completed – FY 01	181,155
Unconfirmed Complaints – FY 01	1,300

MetroAccess data indicate that Montgomery County residents requested 293,701 trips during FY 2001, and completed 181,155 trips. According to DPWT, the difference between the number of requested and completed trips represents cancelled trips or changed plans. The 181,155 completed trips represents, on average, 3,484 trips per week or 496 trips per day.

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[11] Applicants can appeal a MetroAccess decision to deny eligibility.

Certified clients contact MetroAccess to schedule trips on a first-come, first-serve basis. There are no restrictions on the purpose of the MetroAccess trips, but users must reserve trips between one and 14 days in advance. MetroAccess operates on the same schedule as the rest of the WMATA system. It costs twice the regular Metro fees rate or $2.20 each way at rush hour and $1.80 at non-rush. Certified clients can travel anywhere within the Metro regional system including Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, Prince George's County, and Montgomery County. However, the MetroAccess service area only extends to within 3/4 mile of a fixed route transportation system. Clients residing more than 3/4 mile from a fixed route are responsible for getting to the service area to be picked up by a MetroAccess vehicle.

The November 2001 MetroAccess monthly report indicates that the average trip lasted 34 minutes and traveled nine miles. During November 2001, approximately half of the requests for service represent regularly scheduled trips (e.g., transportation to a workplace five days per week). The other half represents one time or non-regularly scheduled trips. Table 14 shows that approximately 70% of the November 2001 trips served ambulatory clients and 27% served clients in wheelchairs.

Table 14 – Type of Service Provided, November 2001

Type of Service	Percent of Total Trips
Total Trips in November 2001	18,254
Ambulatory Clients	70%
Wheelchair Clients	27%
Clients with a Companion or Personal Care Provider[12]	3%

In FY 2001, MetroAccess provided approximately half of the trips via Metro's fleet of sedans and wheelchair lift equipped vans. Private taxis, under contract with Logisticare, provided approximately 30% of the MetroAccess trips during the year. When the Metro fleet and contracted taxis cannot meet the demand for rides, Logisticare contracts with other private providers. These supplemental carriers provided Approximately 20% of the MetroAccess trips in FY 2001.

For trips provided by taxis, WMATA's contract with Logisticare requires Logisticare to arrange for taxis with wheelchair lifts as needed. The Commission on People with Disabilities reports that wheelchair accessible taxis are not always available when needed, and taxi drivers may choose not to accept wheelchair riders because the trips take longer to complete.

According to DPWT, Montgomery County users encountered some problems with MetroAccess service when Logisticare began operating the system in FY 01. DPWT staff invested considerable time during the transition to Logisticare management

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[12] Personal Care Attendants can accompany certified riders at no cost.

to help County residents get the service they needed from MetroAccess. Common complaints included long waits, failure of the transportation to arrive at all, and long rides. DPWT reports receiving fewer complaints about MetroAccess service currently. Table 15 presents MetroAccess performance data reported to DPWT for November 2001. During November 6% of the trips were late. MetroAccess was 34 minutes late on average, and 14 MetroAccess rides were over 90 minutes late. Another 60 trips were missed. The data also reports 979 passenger no shows during November 2001.

Table 15 – MetroAccess Performance Data, November 2001

	Number	Percent of Total Trips
Total Trips	18,254	100%
Missed Trips	60	0.3%
Late Trips/Average Time Late	1,145/34 minutes	6.0%
Passenger No Shows	979	5.0%

2. Meditrans (Medicaid Transportation)

In FY 2002, the Council appropriated $1.9 million of State funds to DPWT for Meditrans (Medicaid Transportation).[13] Meditrans provides free transportation to medical appointments via private providers for individuals:

- Unable to use regular public transportation,
- With no other means of transportation, and
- Eligible for Medicaid benefits.

However, Medicaid eligibility does not guarantee eligibility for Meditrans. For example, seniors who receive Medicaid under the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Program or the Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary Program are not eligible for Meditrans.

DPWT's Medicaid Transportation office coordinates this service and manages contracts with private transportation providers. All trips must be arranged through DPWT no more than five days in advance but not less than one day in advance of the medical appointment.

Medicaid Transportation provided 52,459 one-way trips to medical appointments for eligible Montgomery County clients in FY 2001. Approximately 28,000 or 54% of the trips were wheelchair van trips, 23,000 or 43% of the trips were taxicab trips, and 1,381 or 3% were non-emergency ambulance trips. DPWT data also indicate that Meditrans received 88 complaints during FY 2001.

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[13] Includes the original appropriation plus a supplemental appropriation in November 2001 to cover an increase in clients.

3. City of Rockville Call-N-Ride

The City of Rockville operates a Call-N-Ride program similar to Montgomery County's, but does not base eligibility on income. To be eligible for Rockville's program, individuals must:

- Live within the Rockville city limits, and
- Be 60 years of age and older, or have a disability that prevents them from driving.

Rockville sells approximately 115 books per month, and reports a 100% coupon redemption rate. Rockville Call-N-Ride users receive one coupon book per moth worth $25. The coupon books cost between $3 to $18 per book, depending on the user's income. Staff estimates that 70% of the users are low income.

4. Jewish Council for the Aging Opportunity Grant Program

JCA operates an opportunity grant program to help low income seniors pay for transportation services. These funds are to be used as a last resort after other transportation options have been explored. JCA's Forgotten Elders Fund sponsors the opportunity grants. JCA expects to allocate between $6,000 and $10,000 to help seniors pay for transportation during FY 2002.

Seniors in single person households with incomes below $40,799 are eligible. Two-person households with incomes below $50,999 are eligible. Opportunity Grant funds may be used for medical/dental/rehabilitative/dialysis appointments, shopping, religious or cultural events, to senior centers or socialization/recreational programs, or to visit a friend or relative in a hospital or nursing facility. The grant cannot be used for transportation to employment or volunteer opportunities, to reimburse family or friends for rides, or to tip drivers.

Seniors participating in the Opportunity Grant program call JCA within three days of a trip to schedule transportation and JCA arranges for one of three contracted taxi companies or an escorted transportation service to provide the transportation. These companies bill JCA for the trips. JCA staff works closely with these four companies to ensure that drivers are sensitive to the needs of seniors.

Twenty seniors currently participate, with another 15 in the application process. JCA has the capacity to assist 41 seniors with the Opportunity Grant Program for transportation services in FY 2002.

C. Assisted/Escorted Transportation

1. City of Rockville Senior Buses

In addition to Rockville's Call-N-Ride program, Rockville residents 60 years and older can take City buses to the Rockville Senior Center, grocery stores, and area malls. The bus driver assists those who need help getting to and from the bus. Four Rockville buses transport seniors from their homes to the Rockville Senior Center three times per day for free. Users must request a ride from their homes at least 24 hours in advance. The service also picks up seniors from specific apartment complexes two times per week. Seniors pay $1.00 per trip for transportation to grocery shopping, and $1.50 for other shopping trips.

2. HELP Organizations

OLO discussed transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities with the following County HELP organizations:

- Damascus
- Gaithersburg
- Germantown
- Silver Spring/Wheaton, and
- Western Upper Montgomery County.

Western Upper Montgomery County. The Western Upper Montgomery County (WUMCO) HELP provides curb-to-curb and assisted/escorted transportation services. Approximately 65% of the WUMCO clients are seniors. WUMCO serves residents of Poolesville, Beallsville, Barnesville, Dickerson, and Boyds zip codes, and transports to locations throughout the Baltimore-Washington region. The map on page 37 shows the areas served.

WUMCO HELP primarily transports to medical appointments. They prefer as much advance notice of trips as possible, but have accommodated same day service as well. WUMCO HELP transports people in wheelchairs and people with multiple medical appointments per week.

WUMCO HELP provided approximately 140 round trips for seniors during calendar year 2001, and did not turn down any requests for rides. Nine volunteer drivers provided approximately 62% of the total round trips. WUMCO HELP has an account with the Barwood taxi company for trips that volunteers cannot accommodate. WUMCO arranges the trip with Barwood, and Barwood bills WUMCO.

Gaithersburg. Gaithersburg HELP provides transportation services to residents of all the Gaithersburg zip codes. The map on page 37 shows the areas served. Over 50% of the Gaithersburg HELP clients are over 65 years of age. Gaithersburg HELP currently

has 20 volunteer drivers. They need at least a couple days notice to arrange a ride with a volunteer. If a volunteer is not available, Gaithersburg HELP provides cab vouchers.

Gaithersburg HELP received 445 requests for transportation in 2001. Of the 445 requests:

- 66% received a ride from a volunteer driver
- 19% received a HELP funded taxi ride
- 9% were cancelled or refused, and
- 6% of the requests could not be filled.

Silver Spring/Wheaton and Germantown. Representatives from these two HELP organizations reported that they do not have enough volunteers to provide transportation services. They use their limited volunteer pool to bring food to individuals in need.

Damascus. Damascus HELP reports that the organization only provides two or three senior transportation trips per month, and only within the immediate Damascus area. They used to get more requests for rides, but believe that increased Ride On service in the area resulted in less need.

3. Private Providers

This part of the report describes two private transportation companies. Both of these providers serve individuals in wheelchairs. According to the Jewish Council for the Aging, the majority of private fee-for-service transportation includes assistance during the trip. This part of the report provides information for comparison to the public and non-profit programs, but does not necessarily reflect private transportation providers in the County.

Wheelchair Mobile Transport. Wheelchair Mobile Transport uses 12 wheelchair lift equipped vans to transport individuals, primarily to medical appointments. A large proportion of the clients use Wheelchair Mobile Transport for rides to frequent dialysis appointments. Wheelchair Mobile Transport takes clients to any location in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan region. At least 24 hours notice is required for trips outside Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and the District of Columbia.
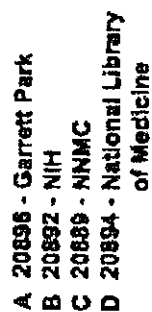
Trips cost $110 per round trip, with a $1.50 charge per mile for any trip over 10 miles. Wheelchair Mobile Transport adds 15% to those fees for trips scheduled on the weekend or after 6 p.m. on weekdays. Approximately 70% of the clients are on Medicaid. Wheelchair Mobile Transport charges Medicaid clients $31.50 per one-way trip and $63 per round trip, plus $1.00 per mile over 10 miles. Wheelchair Mobile Transport indicates that insurance costs drive their fees, because lawsuits are common in the paratransit industry.

Wheelchair Mobile Transport provides approximately 18,000 round trips annually. Drivers help riders to and from, and into and out of the vehicle. They also help the rider get settled at their destination. Between 65% and 70% of the clients are elderly and 30% to 35% are people with disabilities.

Mobile Care Limited. Mobile Care Limited also provides wheelchair accessible transportation. Like Wheelchair Mobile Transport, this provider serves mostly seniors going to medical appointments in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan area. A large proportion of the clients also take trips for dialysis treatments. The drivers provide assistance to and from, and into and out of the vehicle. Mobile Care Limited accepts Medicaid clients. The cost for the service ranges from $63 to $100 per trip, with a $2.00 per mile charge for trips over 10 miles.

ASSISTED/ESCORTED
TRANSPORTATION –
WUMCO AND
GAITHERSBURG HELP

WUMCO HELP →

GAITHERSBURG
HELP

A 20896 - Garrett Park
B 20892 - NIH
C 20889 - NNMC
D 20894 - National Library
          of Medicine

37

Source: Geographic Information Systems, DIST

IV. The Need for Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities

OLO collected available data on the need for transportation services among seniors and people with disabilities. This part of the report describes the number of seniors and people with disabilities in the County, as well as data on senior car ownership, location, and income. It also describes data on transportation needs from the:

- Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission,
- Commission on Aging,
- Grass Roots Organization for the Well-being of Seniors, and
- City of Rockville.

A. Demographics

1. Number of Seniors and People with Disabilities

The 2000 Census indicates that 98,157 individuals 65 years and older reside in Montgomery County. Table 16 shows the County's 2000 senior population by age. Approximately 50% are 75 and older. Those 75 years and older typically require more support services, including transportation.

Table 16 – Montgomery County Senior Population by Age – 2000 Census

Age	Number	Percent of Total County Senior Population
65-69	26,105	26.6%
70-74	23,998	24.5%
75-79	20,921	21.3%
80-84	14,150	14.4%
85+	12,983	13.2%
Total	**98,157**	**100%**

Census 2000, US Census Bureau, June 2001

Table 17 (page 39) provides data on the number of people with a disability in Montgomery County. Approximately 92,000 or 11% of County residents have a disability.[14] The majority of people with a disability (53%) are between 21 and 64 years of age. However, individuals over the age of 65 are more likely to have a disability. Approximately 34% of County residents over 65 years have a disability.

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[14] Non-institutionalized population

Table 17 – Number of People with Disabilities in Montgomery County, December 2001

Age Group	# of People with a Disability
5-20 Years	12,004
21-64 Years	48,839
65+ Years	31,064
TOTAL	91,907

Department of Health and Human Services, December 2001

2. Car Ownership and Licensed Drivers

M-NCPPC reported data on senior car ownership in Montgomery County in 1997. Table 18 indicates that car ownership decreases as the head of household ages, with almost 50% of people over 65 reporting that they do not own a car.

Table 18 – Car Ownership by Age, 1997

Age	Persons who do not own a car	Person who own a car
65-74	4.4%	95.6%
75-84	10.4%	89.6%
85+	34.4%	65.6%

M-NCPPC, 1997

The U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration reported data on licensed drivers. Table 19 shows the number of licensed drivers over 65 in the US as of 2000. The data indicate that the proportion of people with licenses decreases as age increases. This corresponds with data indicating that car ownership declines with age.

Table 19 – Licensed Drivers Nationwide Age 65+

| Age	Licensed Drivers	Licensed Drivers as percent of Age Group
65-74	15,853,443	86.2%
75-84	6,262216	75.4%
85+	2,050,150	48.4%

October 2001, U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration

3. Income

In 1990, the Census Bureau reported that the median annual income of people with disabilities in Montgomery County was $14,139. Approximately 74% of people with disabilities in Montgomery County in 1990 had annual incomes less than $20,000. Updated data on incomes of people with disabilities will be available in the summer 2002.

Graph 2 shows data from the 1996 Census Update on income for households headed by persons 65 and older in Montgomery County. The majority of seniors had incomes between $40,000 and $89,000. Approximately 8,000 or 13% of people over 65 years of age had income below $20,000 in 1996. Updated senior income data will be available in the summer of 2002.

Graph 2 – Income of Seniors Age 65+ in Montgomery County, 1996
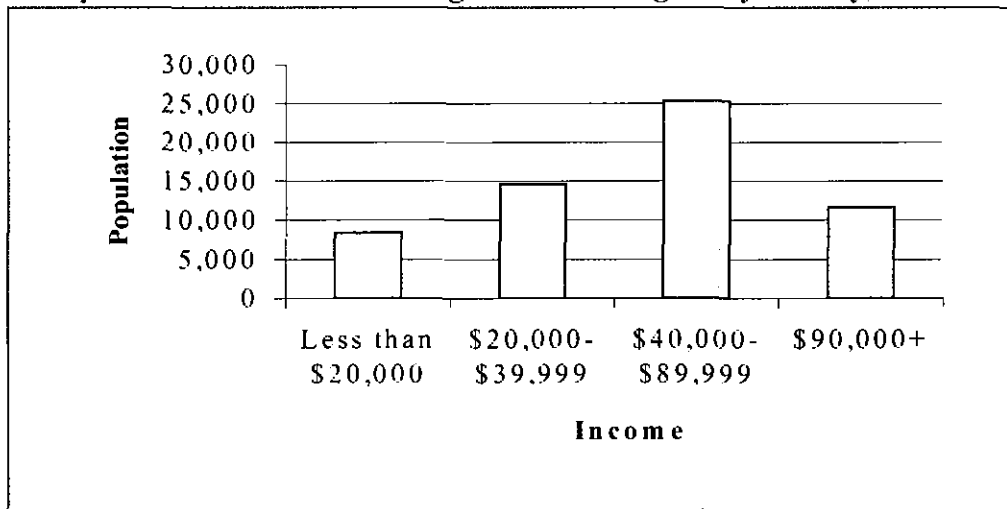
4. Location

M-NCPPC reported in 1997 that the majority of individuals over 65 years of age lived in the down-County planning areas. Table 20 shows the six planning areas with the highest proportion of residents over 65 years of age.

Table 20 – County Senior Population by Planning Area, 1997

Planning Area	Percent of Residents 65 Years and Older
Aspen Hill (includes Leisure World)	9%
Bethesda/Chevy Chase	9%
North Bethesda/Garrett Park	7%
Kensington/Wheaton	7%
Kemp Mill/Four Corners	7%
Colesville/White Oak	7%

The Jewish Council for the Aging's Connect-A-Ride program tracks the location of inquiries about transportation services. During FY 2001, 79% of the calls for information about transportation came from down-county residents. The Jewish Council for the Aging, Grass Roots Organization for the Well-being of Seniors, and DHHS' Aging and Disability Services staff also report transportation needs Up-County. However, a County-funded Up-County Transportation pilot program in FY 1999 did not attract users.

The Council appropriated $50,000 in FY 1999 for a contract with the Jewish Council for the Aging for the Up-County Transportation Pilot Project. JCA developed a program to transport seniors from the Damascus Senior Center to Montgomery General Hospital and Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. The goal was to help seniors and people with disabilities residing Up-County get to medical appointments and to locations where they could access other transportation services (e.g., MetroAccess). The program operated several round trips two days per week for $.50 per ride.

Planning and implementation included outreach to the community via press releases, and flyers distributed to the senior center, faith communities, physicians, and the hospitals. In response to low usage during the first two months of operation, JCA offered to transport seniors from their homes to the Damascus Senior Center, and to add special trips to shopping centers and other Damascus locations at no charge. Due to continued low usage, JCA terminated the program.

In total, JCA operated the pilot from June 2000 through January 2001, providing 36 rides for 14 people. JCA's report on the Up-County Transportation Pilot speculates that the need for transportation services Up-County exists, however:

- The seniors in the region rely on relatives and friends for rides, and
- The more frail and isolated seniors who need transportation probably do not use the Damascus Senior Center, and were not connected to this new transportation resource, and
- The seniors that use the Damascus Senior Center are not accustomed to or comfortable with bus transportation.

B. Needs Assessments

1. Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)

As part of the 1997 Census Update, M-NCPPC surveyed County residents about their need for personal care, adult day care, and transportation services. Approximately 6% of the residents aged 65 and older indicated that transportation is a significant service need. Table 21 (page 42) shows the percentage of seniors that reported needing transportation by age services. As expected, the number of seniors reporting transportation needs increases with age. M-NCPPC will have updated U.S. Census data on transportation needs in the summer of 2002.

Table 21 – Seniors Reporting Significant Need for Transportation

Age	Number of Seniors 65+ in County	Percent of Seniors Reporting Transportation Needs 65+	Seniors 65+ Reporting Transportation Needs
65-74	50,103	3%	1,503
75-84	35,071	7.3%	2,560
85+	12,983	17%	2,207
Total	**98,157**	**6.4%**	**6,270**

2. Commission on Aging Survey

The Commission on Aging conducted a survey in April 1997 of 172 senior center users,[15] and 32 non-profit and private transportation providers. The data provide insight into the needs of some seniors for transportation to and from Senior Centers. It does not necessarily reflect the transportation needs of seniors countywide.

The seniors surveyed use different forms of transportation to get to the senior centers, including:

- 35% in their own car
- 33% via a Program Transportation bus
- 14% with a friend or family member, and
- 11% on the Ride-On bus system.

In other words, half of the seniors surveyed use their own transportation and half use public Ride-On and Program Transportation services to senior/community centers.

The Commission found that the greatest need for transportation services was to the Up-County Senior Center, which reported 30 seniors in need of transportation to the Center. The only Center that did not report a need for more transportation was the Ross Boddy Center. Approximately half of the seniors reported that the Program Transportation trip from their home to the senior center took an hour or longer.

The Commission reported that 80 respondents were not able to use Ride On or Metro bus service to reach the senior center. The Commission on Aging survey also found that there is limited knowledge of or interest in the Call-N-Ride program or MetroAccess among the seniors interviewed at the Centers.

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[15] The Commission interviewed seniors at Holiday Park, Margaret Schweinhaut, Long Branch, Ross Boddy and Up-County Senior Centers.

42

3. Grass Roots Organization for the Well-being of Seniors (GROWS) Senior Needs Survey

The Grass Roots Organization for the Well-being of Seniors, Inc. (GROWS) is a not-for-profit membership organization of senior service providers, agencies, businesses and individuals concerned about the well-being of older adults living in Montgomery County. Between February and June 2000, GROWS conducted a survey of providers that serve seniors to gather information on the unmet service needs of older adults in the County.

GROWS conducted over 100 phone interviews. The telephone interviews were conducted with providers of 30 different types of senior services, including facility-based services (nursing homes, assisted living facilities) and home or community-based services (home health, day care, and transportation).

GROWS asked providers six questions.[16] According to GROWS, approximately 65% of the respondents stated that transportation is the greatest unmet need for older adults and caregivers. Assisted/escorted transportation was cited as a critical need for more frail seniors, because they often need help walking to and from the vehicle. Survey respondents also reported that obtaining transportation and other needs is even more challenging for seniors who have difficulty speaking English.

4. Rockville Elderly Survey

The University of Maryland Survey Research Center completed a senior survey for the City of Rockville in September 2001. The Center interviewed 401 seniors who live within the Rockville City limits. The survey found:

- Approximately 88% of the respondents have valid driver's licenses,
- 72% of the respondents indicated that they drive all the time,
- 77% of the respondents do not use public transportation (other than City of Rockville services).

Table 22 (page 44) presents data on the use of the City of Rockville transportation services described in this report. A small percentage of the respondents use the City's transportation services. Of the respondents that do not participate in Rockville Senior Center activities, only 2% indicated that was because they lack transportation.

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[16] 1) In your involvement with seniors in Montgomery County, what is the older residents' greatest problem or need? 2) What is the greatest obstacle or barrier in providing your service to seniors? 3) What should be improved in the senior services delivery system to help improve their organization or service? 4) What are some other problems with senior services not necessarily connected to your service or organization? 5) What are solutions to issues, problems, or needs identified? 6) What are some good aspects of operating a senior service in Montgomery County? 7) Has your service recently changed or do you see it changing in the future?

Table 22 – Use of City of Rockville Transportation Services, 2001

	Percent of Respondents that Use the Service
Rockville Call-N-Ride	0.9%
Senior Bus to Senior Center	1.6%
Senior Bus to Shopping	2.2%

Rockville Elderly Survey Report, University of Maryland Survey Research Center, September 2001

5. Aging and Disability Needs Assessment

During FY 2001-2002, DHHS contracted with the University of Maryland Center for Health Program Development and Management to complete a needs assessment for Montgomery County seniors. The assessment focused on seniors 75 years and older, with a functional impairment, and incomes less than $25,000. DHHS expects to distribute the needs assessment in the spring of 2002.

C. Related Transportation Issues

1. Senior Living Facilities

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) staff reports that responses to senior living facilities represent a significant portion of fire and rescue's medical call load, and the calls are frequently of a non-emergency nature. MCFRS is not required to transport a patient who does not have an emergent need, but refusal to transport can create a very contentious situation. According to MCFRS, a variety of factors contribute to the increase in calls to 9-1-1 for non-emergency transport from senior living facilities, including:

- Limited medical care available at the senior living facilities,
- Fewer affordable transportation options for routine medical care as a result of changes in Medicare that only reimburse providers for certain emergency transports,
- Increase in physicians' convenience-driven requests to see patients at a hospital instead of their office,
- Insufficient training of senior living facilities staff in when to call 9-1-1, due to high staff turnover and limited MCFRS training resources.

Non-emergency calls from senior living facilities strain MCFRS resources. MCFRS observes the highest impact in regions of the County with high concentrations of senior living facilities. These regions are also in some of MCFRS' highest workload areas (e.g. Fire Station 25 at Connecticut Avenue and Bel Pre Road, Fire Station 8 at Montgomery Village and Russell Avenue). MCFRS is concerned that the volume of responses to non-emergency calls from senior living facilities negatively impacts the response to other emergency calls. In response, MCFRS is changing its emergency

medical dispatch training to better enable Fire and Rescue to categorize 9-1-1 calls in priority order. MCFRS is also communicating with senior living facilities about appropriate use of 9-1-1.

2. Hospital Patients

Nursing home residents and other seniors sometimes do not have transportation home after completing a hospital visit. Representatives at Suburban and Holy Cross Hospitals indicated that when family and friends are not available to drive seniors home after hospital visits, the hospitals call taxi companies, MetroAccess, or private transportation providers. Taxis and MetroAccess are not ideal options because they provide only curb-to-curb transport, without assistance for frail or ill seniors. In addition, taxi companies do not always have wheelchair accessible vehicles available.

The cost of these services also represents a problem for lower income seniors and people with disabilities. A one-way private wheelchair accessible van trip costs between $50 and $100 dollars. Hospital staff also mentioned difficulty finding transportation for dialysis and cancer treatment patients, who require numerous trips to the hospital each week.

V. Summary of Findings

The Council appropriated $3.7 million of County funds in FY 2002 for transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. In sum, OLO found that:

- Seniors and people with disabilities living in Montgomery County rely on different means of transport, some of which are publicly funded;

- County dollars fund a complex array of transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities in Montgomery County, including curb-to-curb transportation, fixed route transportation, assisted/escorted transportation, and transportation information and assistance services; and

- Formal assessments that quantify the transportation needs of seniors and people with disabilities are limited.

Finding 1. Seniors and people with disabilities living in Montgomery County rely on different means of transport, including family and friends, volunteers, private service providers (e.g., taxis, private wheelchair transport), and publicly-funded programs.

Some seniors and people with disabilities living in Montgomery County rely on family members and friends for transportation, some rely on private transportation providers (i.e., taxis, and private wheelchair transport), and some rely on publicly funded transportation services.

The State funds Metro fixed route bus and rail service in the County, which offers reduced fares and accessible buses and trains for seniors and people with disabilities. In FY 01, the State spent $3.1 million for MetroAccess and Medicaid Transportation. In FY 01, MetroAccess provided 181,000 one-way trips in Montgomery County, and Medicaid Transportation provided 52,500 one-way trips. The State also supports DPWT's Call-N-Ride program, providing $364,000 in FY 2002.

In FY 02, the Council appropriated close to $3.7 million County dollars for transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. Finding #2 details how these funds are allocated.

Finding 2. The Council appropriated approximately $3.7 million County dollars in FY 2002 for a complex array of transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities in Montgomery County. The funds are distributed among multiple departments. As a result multiple County departments and Council Committees make program, policy, and budget decisions about the services.

The Council appropriated $3.7 million of County funds in FY 2002 for transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. The funds are distributed among multiple departments, support different types of services, and target different segments of the population. In sum, the $3.7 million in County funding includes:

- $2.5 million for curb-to-curb transportation,
- $806,000 for fixed route transportation,
- $211,000 for assisted/escorted transportation, and
- $186,000 for transportation information and assistance.

Graph 2 illustrates the $3.7 million appropriated in FY 2002 by type of transportation service. The remainder of Finding 2 describes the programs funded under each type of transportation service.

Graph 2 – County Funding for Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities by Type of Service, FY 2002
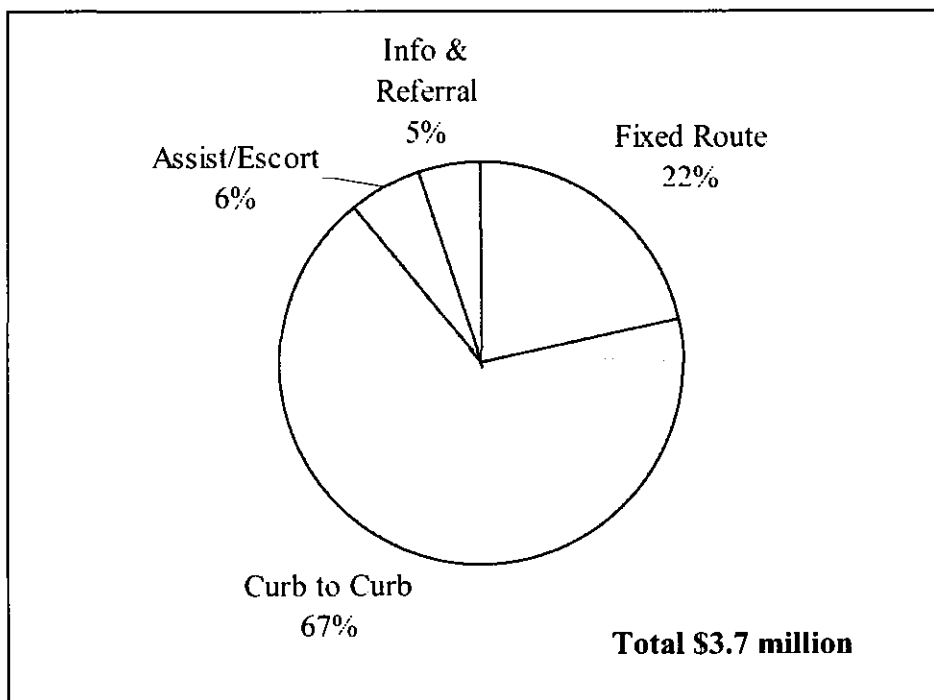
Curb to Curb Transportation. Approximately $2.5 million, or 67% of the $3.7 million, funds curb-to-curb transportation services. The largest share of this ($1.8 million) funds Call-N-Ride.

Curb-to-curb programs pick riders up at their residence or other location and drop them off at their destination. It does not include assistance during the trip. Table 23 (page 49) summarizes the FY 2002 County-funded curb-to-curb services.

Table 23 – FY 2002 County-funded Curb-to-Curb Services

Program	FY 2002 County Dollars	Number of Trips FY 01	Number of Users FY 01
Call-N-Ride	$1,810,098	94,575 one-way	2,847 certified users
Program Transportation	$645,310	47,667 round trips	N/A
Transportation to Springfield Hospital (Mental Health Association)	$50,000	524 one-way	392 riders

Program Transportation provides transportation to senior/community centers and grocery stores. The Mental Health Association's curb to curb service provides transportation to Springfield Hospital Center. In contrast, Call-N-Ride coupons can be used for any trip purpose and for transportation to any location in the Washington region.

Program Transportation serves seniors over 55 years of age that live within specified geographic boundaries of 11 senior/community centers. MHA transports any Springfield Hospital client and his/her family from six pick-up points in the County. To be eligible for Call-N-Ride, users must be disabled or over 68 years of age, and have incomes under $20,000.

Fixed Route Public Transportation. Approximately $806,000, or 22% of the $3.7 million, funds Ride On fixed route transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. Fixed route transportation services meet the needs of some seniors and people with disabilities via wheelchair accessible buses and reduced fares.

Fixed route systems meet the needs of individuals who can get to a Ride On stop, get on and off the bus, and move from the bus to their destination. By May 2002, the 366-bus fleet will include 322 wheelchair accessible buses. DPWT also offers reduced fares of $.50 per ride for seniors 65 years and older and people with disabilities.

DPWT data indicate that individuals took 375,000 rides during FY 2001 using the reduced fare for seniors and people with disabilities. That represents approximately 2% of the 21.7 million Ride On trips during the fiscal year, although seniors and people with disabilities represent approximately 20% of the County population. At an average cost of $2.15 per Ride On passenger, the trips using the reduced far account for approximately $806,000.

Assisted/Escorted Transportation. Approximately $211,000, or 6% of the $3.7 million, funds assisted/escorted transportation services. Half of these funds support two contracts for volunteer-based car transportation for seniors that live down-County. Another third of the funds were allocated for a new DHHS assisted/escorted transportation initiative;

Assisted/escorted transportation programs serve individuals who need assistance during the trip, such as help getting to the vehicle and in and out of the vehicle, help putting on a coat, or help carrying packages. Table 24 summarizes the FY 2002 County-funded assisted/escorted services.

Table 24 – FY 2002 County-funded Assisted/Escorted Services

Service	FY 2002 County Dollars	Number of Trips FY 01	Number of Users FY 01
DHHS and private providers to be determined	$70,000[17]	Program not yet implemented.	
ASSISST trips to medical appointments and errands	$58,860	2,172 round trips	432
SIRC trips to medical appointments and errands	$46,820	1,120 one-way	122
Victory Housing trips to recreational activities	$30,000	Program not yet implemented.	
Wintergrowth trips to medical appointments for Adult Foster Care clients	$5,277	68 round trips	20

The Council appropriated $90,000 to DHHS in FY 2002 for additional assisted/escorted transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. As of this writing, that initiative has not been implemented and no funds have been spent. DHHS plans to use Aging and Disability Services' Information and Assistance Unit staff to field calls for the service and coordinate the transportation with a provider. The Department submitted an open solicitation to contract with private providers to provide the transportation. A few providers have responded. The Department plans to serve individuals that are not served by existing assisted/escorted transportation providers.

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[17] The Council appropriated $90,000. The total was reduced to $70,000 as part of the FY 2002 savings plan.

SIRC and ASSISST provide free assisted/escorted transportation within limited geographic areas of the County through volunteer drivers. The number of volunteers limits the number of trips SIRC and ASSISST can provide. SIRC serves Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Cabin John, Potomac, Kensington, and Garrett Park. ASSISST serves Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Wheaton, Burtonsville, and Spencerville.

In terms of non-County-funded transportation services, Gaithersburg HELP and Western Upper Montgomery County HELP provide assisted/escorted transportation in Gaithersburg, Poolesville, Beallsville Barnesville, Dickerson, and Boyds. The map on page 53 illustrates the regions of the County currently served by County and non-County funded assisted/escorted transportation services.

Comprehensive data on the need for assisted/escorted transportation are not available. SIRC and ASSISST report that their organizations are able to provide rides for almost 100% of the requests that they receive, but that there is additional need in the community for this type of service. SIRC and ASSISST do not advertise their services because they do not have the capacity to serve additional clients at this time. In addition, the Jewish Council for the Aging reports that approximately 80% of the individuals that call Connect-A-Ride for transportation information and referral request assisted/escorted transportation.

Information and Assistance Services. Approximately $186,000, or 7% of the $3.7 million, funds transportation information, referral, assistance, and outreach services. These programs do not provide transportation directly.

Table 25 (page 51) summarizes the FY 2002 County-funded Information and Assistance services. All three programs respond to telephone inquiries about transportation services throughout the County. The information is provided at no cost. Collectively, the three programs reported about 2,600 contacts with seniors and people with disabilities in FY 01. This represents a very small percentage of the total number of seniors and people with disabilities in Montgomery County.

Connect-A-Ride maintains a database of public, private and non-profit transportation providers and refers callers to appropriate providers, based on their transportation needs. Connect-A-Ride referred 619 callers to transportation providers during FY 2001. However, Connect-A-Ride's follow up surveys found that only 40% of the callers received the transportation they needed from the Connect-A-Ride referrals.

The DPWT dollars fund a transit coordinator who provides information about publicly funded transportation services (e.g., Call-N-Ride, Medicaid Transportation, and MetroAccess) and coordinates with other service providers (e.g., WMATA). Aging and Disability Services' Information and Assistance Unit staff respond to questions about transportation, as well as other services for seniors and people with disabilities. Connect-A-Ride, DPWT and DHHS staff also visit senior centers and other locations to present information about transportation services, help individuals identify appropriate services, and help individuals complete applications for transportation services.

Table 25 – FY 2002 County-funded Information and Assistance Services

Program	FY 2002 County Dollars	Number of Phone Contacts FY 2001
Connect-A-Ride – DHHS (contract with Jewish Council for the Aging)	$90,963	623
Information and Outreach – DPWT	$60,045[18]	442 (July 2001- Nov 2001)
Information and Assistance – DHHS	$34,804[19]	1,582

Finding 3. Data are available on the numbers of seniors and people with disabilities in the County. However, formal assessments that quantify the unmet need for transportation among seniors and people with disabilities is limited. Reliable data on transportation needs is a critical component of future Council decision-making.

Census data (2000) indicate that there are approximately 159,000 people over 65 years of age and/or with a disability living in Montgomery County. Specifically, Census data show:

- 61,000 people between 5 and 64 years of age with a disability;
- 67,000 people 65 years and older without a disability, and'
- 31,000 people 65 years and over with a disability.

The County also has access to data about car ownership, income, and geographic location of seniors in Montgomery County.

Data on the number of seniors and people with disabilities with transportation needs not met by family/friends, other private transportation providers, or publicly-funded services is limited. In addition, the data that are available paint different pictures of transportation use need. For example:

- According to a 1997 M-NCPPC survey, 6 percent of residents 65 and older (or 6,270 people) report that transportation is a significant service need.

- Half of the respondents to a Commission of Aging survey indicate that they rely on their own car or a family member/friend for transportation to senior centers. The other half of the respondent's report that they get to senior centers via the County's Ride On system or Program Transportation.

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[18] This is the cost of a transit coordinator that provides information, outreach, and coordination services for seniors and people with disabilities full time.

[19] The Council appropriated $909,040 for the Information and Assistance Unit in FY 02. The $34,804 figure represents 1,582 telephone calls seeking transportation information and assistance in FY 2001 at average cost of $22 per Information Line call.

- A survey of seniors living in the City of Rockville found that 88 percent of seniors have a valid driver's license and 72 percent reported that they drive all the time.

- Census data indicate that approximately 8,000, or 13%, of seniors in Montgomery County had incomes below $20,000 in 1996, and

- M-NCPPC reports that in 1997, approximately 50% of people over 65 did not own a car.

Although data are not available to quantify the needs, private providers and County Government staff report there is a need for:

- Transportation to senior/community centers for seniors who live outside the geographic areas currently served by Program Transportation,
- Additional assisted/escorted transportation,
- Additional same day services or services that do not require advance notice, and
- More convenient MetroAccess service for people who live more than ¾ mile from a fixed bus route.

In sum, while the demographic and other need-related information that is available is useful, detailed data are not currently available about what proportion of seniors and people with disabilities face mobility issues that significantly impact their quality of life. A more complete analysis of needs, including the type, location, and affordability of service needs, is critical for the Council to fully assess the adequacy and appropriateness of the existing services and level of funding.

COUNTY AND NON- COUNTY
FUNDED ASSISTED/ESCORTED
TRANSPORTATION – ASSIST, SIRC,
WUMCO AND GAITHERSBURG
HELP

GAITHERSBURG
HELP

← ASSIST

WUMCO HELP →

SIRC →

A	20696 - Garrett Park
B	20892 - NIH
C	20889 - NNMC
D	20894 - National Library
	of Medicine

20707
(Laurel, MD)

21797
(Woodbine, MD)

21771
(Mt. Airy, MD)

20868
Spencerville

20862
Brinklow

20861
Ashton

20833
Brookeville

20832
Cindy

20905
Colesville

20904
Colesville

20902
Wheaton

20906
Aspen
Hill

20910
Silver
Spring

20853
Rockville

20852
Rockville

20817
West
Bethesda

20854
Potomac

20872
Damascus

20882
Gaithersburg

20879
Gaithersburg

20877
Gaithersburg

20878
Gaithersburg

20874
Germantown

20876
Germantown

20871
Clarksburg

20841
Boyds

20837
Poolesville

20842
Dickerson

20838
Beallsville

20812
Glen Echo

20818
Cabin John

Source: Geographic Information Systems. DIST

53

VII. Recommendations

Recommendation 1. OLO recommends that the Council make future policy and funding decisions about transportation services *for seniors and people with disabilities* within the context of all the relevant transportation services available.

This report provides comprehensive information about the FY 2002 County-funded transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. The Council can use this baseline information to better understand the complex array of services currently provided, and to begin to make decisions about individual programs and services in the context of all of the relevant transportation services available.

To facilitate making specific decision making within a broader context of available services, OLO specifically recommends that the Council:

- Routinely schedule joint Council committee meetings (Health and Human Services and Transportation and Environment) when discussing or making decisions on transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities,

- Consistently make funding decisions contingent upon a clear explanation of how proposals impact current services and address needs, and

- Request that the Chief Administrative Officer designate an Executive Branch committee to coordinate information for the Council about the various transportation programs for seniors and people with disabilities and serve as the Council's information resource on these issues.

Recommendation 2. OLO recommends that the Council articulate goals and priorities for funding transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities.

The Council can use the baseline information in this report to begin a process of setting goals and priorities for this issue area. Strategic goal and priority setting will support future policy and budget decision-making, and help ensure that the County funds programs that meet the community's needs and avoids duplication.

OLO recommends that the Council convene a joint Health and Human Services and Transportation and Environment Committee worksession this summer to discuss:

- Specific goals for the County's transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities,
- The array of services currently funded, and
- Priorities for future resource allocation.

Recommendation 3. OLO recommends that the Council pursue additional information about transportation needs among seniors and people with disabilities to use in budget decision-making and goal and priority-setting.

Comprehensive and reliable information about the current and projected transportation needs of seniors and people with disabilities is critical to future policy and budget decision-making. Council goal and priority setting also depends on good information about transportation needs.

At present, there is only limited information available about either the current or projected needs for transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. While the data collected to date has value, it is insufficient for making data-driven decisions about future funding of transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities.

OLO recommends that the Council first examine the results of two DHHS-supported studies expected to be completed by this summer:

- University of Maryland Senior Needs Assessment – is a needs assessment (including transportation needs) of seniors in Montgomery County 75 years of age and older with incomes below $25,000.
- Independent Transportation Network Feasibility Study – is a preliminary feasibility study for developing an Independent Transportation Network in Montgomery County.

OLO also recommends that the Council examine the impact of the new funds appropriated for DHHS in FY 2002 for assisted/escorted transportation. DHHS plans to use those dollars to coordinate and provide assisted/escorted transportation from private providers. The outcomes of that program should provide additional insight into the need for assisted/escorted transportation services.

After review of this information, OLO recommends that the Council specify any additional information that the Council needs and develop a plan for obtaining it during the next year.

Attachment 1

An Overview of The ITN

The Independent Transportation Network began in the mind of Katherine Freund in 1989. She witnessed a tragic accident involving an older driver, which left an indelible impression on her. Katherine realized that there is an ever-increasing need for a transportation alternative that helps seniors maintain their dignity and independence without compromising their safety.

A simple enough idea. That was ten years ago. Since then, the idea has expanded to include the reasoning that automobiles can be hard to use for older citizens, but without an automobile, these same citizens can become shut in, disconnected from their daily lives, social networks, and doctors offices, etc. In effect, lose their independence. The idea has blossomed and developed through research grants from a number of prestigious national organizations, including AARP, the Transportation Research Board (National Academy of Science), the Federal Transit Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and numerous private individuals and foundations.

The ITN delivered its first ride in 1995, for an AARP grant to study the role of volunteerism in the Independent Transportation Network. The big break came in 1997, when the Federal Transit Administration funded the ITN to develop a national model for economically sustainable senior transit funded by a web of community support. The model encompasses support through user fares, volunteer drivers, membership dues, business participation and support from adult children.

At the ITN, we feel with our hearts, think with our brains and work with our hands. This translates into a practical system that addresses the needs of our senior consumers, their families and their communities. The ITN applies the sound practices of business to the mobility needs of seniors and produces an affordable transportation alternative that looks, feels and acts like a private automobile, but captures, through technology and creative thinking, the efficiency of mass transit.

The ITN is transportation for the way we really live. ITN uses automobiles and both paid and volunteer drivers to provide door-to-door service, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. With a cashless, pre-paid account system, senior's pay for their rides by the mile, earning discounts for advance planning and ridesharing. Such programs as the Adult Child Payment Program, Ride & Shop, Healthy Miles, Ride Services, and Car Trade not only help seniors pay for their rides, they connect the community in a web of support for mobility as a common good.
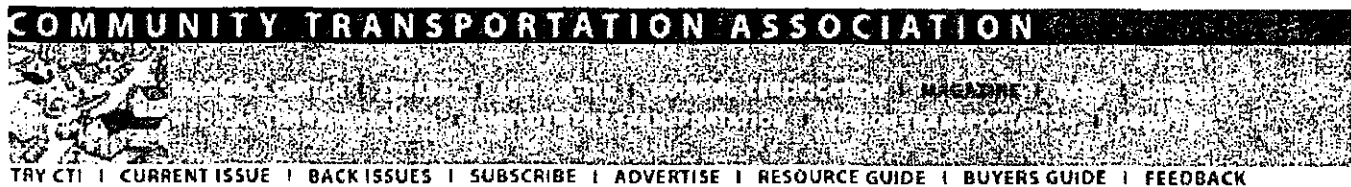
If you have been looking for a transportation solution for yourself, a friend, or a member of your family, welcome to the Independent Transportation Network™.

1

Attachment 2

TRY CTI | CURRENT ISSUE | BACK ISSUES | SUBSCRIBE | ADVERTISE | RESOURCE GUIDE | BUYERS GUIDE | FEEDBACK

Build it and They Will Come

ITN Seeks Sustainable Senior Transit Service with Car-Like Convenience

by Kathy Freund

By almost all measures, except one, the Independent Transportation Network (ITN) is a tiny transit service. Currently operating within a 15-mile radius of Portland, Maine, the ITN serves approximately 600 people age 65 or older, and another 50 people with visual impairments. Started in 1995 with three volunteer drivers, no company owned vehicles and 40 senior riders, the ITN now provides more than 1,200 rides a month, with 75 volunteers driving their own cars and five paid drivers using four company vehicles.

So far, this is a story similar to that of hundreds, perhaps thousands of similar transit services, with committed providers, toiling away, in communities across the United States.

What makes the ITN different is its goal, the idea that shapes and drives every service and design decision made in its pursuit. The goal of the ITN is to meet the mobility needs of America's aging population by developing an economically sustainable, nonprofit transportation service for seniors that is suitable for replication in other communities across the country.

The need for such an alternative is everywhere apparent, not only to those whose profession it is to try to meet that transportation need, but to older adults who fearfully contemplate the end of their driving careers and to their families, who join them in this fearful contemplation. It is also apparent to the news media that dwell increasingly on older driver vehicle crashes, the most overtly alarming of the unintended consequences of this rapidly emerging problem.

Economically Sustainable and Convenient Solutions Needed

The reasoning that led to this goal follows a simple and logical path to
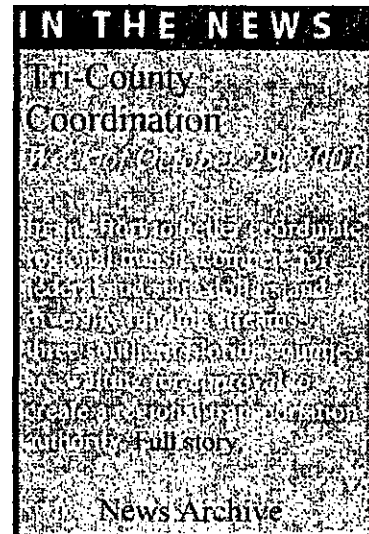
IN THE NEWS

Tri-County Coordination

Full story

News Archive

CONFERENCES

2

the convergence of several significant trends. First, America's population is aging. In 20 years, approximately one in five Americans will be age 65 or older. Second, three-quarters of that aging population is disbursed across rural and suburban communities without the density to support traditional mass transit. Third, there are a proportionately greater number of older licensed drivers, and they are increasing the amount they drive. Fourth, the functional impairments of age increase crash risk for seniors, especially fatal crash risk. Recent projections (see page 20) place the older driver annual fatal crash risk for the year 2020 at 18,934. That is higher than the current alcohol-related annual fatal crash risk of 17,100. Finally, there is an intangible but extremely important need for independence and choice, a need cultivated through a lifetime of get-up-and-go automobility.

Juxtapose this set of converging circumstances with the impending tax burden created by Social Security and Medicare, and the need for an economically sustainable solution pops up on the radar screen. And it is not going away.

The problem can now be posed as a question: How do we create a transportation solution for older adults so attractive to them, as consumers, it will pass the fundamental economic test of willingness to pay? This is, after all, the multi-billion dollar test the automobile passes every minute of the day. Here's another question: What does the automobile give consumers that makes it such an attractive transportation option, and how can we design those desirable characteristics into a transportation service for people who want the comfort and convenience of the private automobile, but who can no longer safely drive one? The answers to these seemingly simple questions have dictated the service design of the Independent Transportation Network.

The ITN uses cars, rather than vans or buses, to pick seniors up and take them where they need to go. Seniors pay for their rides by the mile, with discounts for advance planning and rideshare. Rides scheduled by 6:00 p.m. the day before they are needed cost half as much as rides requested on demand. The choice, however, is the consumer's. Likewise, rides shared with others cost less, and the more people in the vehicle, the lower the charge. Eighty percent of seniors who regularly use the ITN have expressed a willingness to share rides.

Through a TRANSIT-IDEA grant, and with assistance from Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) and GeoFields, the ITN is developing a geographic information system (GIS) component for its software that will permit computer-assisted human decisions so dispatchers can offer rideshare options to seniors when they schedule their rides. Consumers may ride alone, or ride with others. This is the way people use automobiles. Sometimes they ride with others, sometimes, alone. Sometimes they plan in advance, sometimes they don't. The ITN offers all choices, and charges accordingly.

3

Everyone who rides the ITN opens a pre-paid transportation account. Dispatchers, drivers and volunteer drivers record the time, distance and purpose of each ride. Customers receive monthly statements detailing every trip, the amount debited from their account and the amount they are requested to advance for the forthcoming month.

Again, like the automobile, payment is made in advance, and once a month. No cash changes hands in the vehicle, and no taxi-like meter is used. ITN cars are unmarked, just as personal cars are unmarked. An ITN volunteer or paid driver in a fleet vehicle arriving to pick up a senior customer looks like a neighbor, friend or relative.

The ITN is also a membership organization. This key feature is designed to replace the feeling of belonging that accompanies automobile ownership. People who own and drive cars belong to something, some mass, intangible American persona. People who stop driving lose that, and any successful transportation service designed to replace the automobile must somehow understand this issue. Membership in a group is only one way to approach this understanding.

Currently, ITN has about 350 dues-paying members in 25 states and Canada. Membership is open to individuals who use the service, and to those who wish to support it. Adult children of senior customers, businesses, corporations and even seniors living in other communities waiting for an ITN in their hometown all are members of the Independent Transportation Network. This year, the ITN also introduced a *Corporate Partners* program to help fund our regularly published newsletter, our web site (www.itninc.org) and the *Ambassadors Program* , a form of senior speakers bureau.

Avoiding Public Funds is Key

Consumer fares do not cover the full cost of an ITN ride, however, and the ultimate success of the project -- the test of its sustainability -- lies in finding ways to cover this cost without turning to an on-going public subsidy. This is not to imply there is anything wrong with using taxpayer dollars to meet a public need as important as mobility for citizens who have lived beyond their driving years. Indeed, the ITN is using taxpayer dollars to fund much of its research and development, and as a nonprofit organization, it receives many benefits denied to for-profit businesses.

The problem with relying too heavily, in the long run, on taxpayer dollars is that there simply are not enough of them. Scarcity of public resources also causes many of the service delivery problems with which transit providers and transit customers are all too familiar, such as rationing of rides based on worthiness of purpose (medical need, food shopping) or time of day and day of the week limitations.

Another problem that public funding causes is service area restriction. This problem arises when a customer needs a ride from one publicly

4

funded service area to another, and the transportation provider is not permitted to cross an imaginary administrative or political boundary that has nothing to do with the customers transportation needs. If the ITN can achieve economic sustainability without relying on subsidy allocated by administrative district, it can avoid this common frustration and limitation. When supported by consumer fares and community support, the ITN can rest freely in the marketplace like any other business, and cross political boundaries just like McDonalds. Why not?

Numerous research efforts are underway to try to gain access to the consumer dollars necessary for economic sustainability. These efforts include innovative payment plans involving businesses and families of seniors who use the service. The business program is called the *Merchant Participation* program, and it really is no more complicated than a parking sticker. ITN recruits area businesses to issue pre-printed stickers to their senior customers who ride the ITN. Those stickers help pay for the ride, with part of the money going to the senior, and part going to the ITN to help cover the operating loss for that ride. Participating merchants set up accounts, just as participating seniors do. Merchant accounts are debited to pay for rides, just as senior accounts are debited.

A second innovative payment plan involves gift certificates sold to adult children through a gift catalogue. Gifts may be for transportation only, for transportation combined with gift certificates for purchases or for transportation combined with dinner and tickets for a special occasion. These gifts are called, respectively, the *All About Town* plan, the *Dynamic Duo* and the *Works* , named by a teenage volunteer who designed the catalogue as a summer project. Adult children and seniors may pay for gift certificates and deposit funds into accounts with a credit card. Somewhere down the road, the ITN may have an affinity credit card to raise revenue, just like many other nonprofit membership organization.

Harmonious Co-Existence with Transit Neighbors

Beyond the great work involved in climbing the high hill to economic sustainability, there are several other exciting challenges. Developing the tools to replicate our Portland, Maine effort in other communities is certainly one. The ITN is building its own dispatch and database software, a monumental task in itself, but one that will prove invaluable to others trying to duplicate this solution. A handbook is also in the works. A strategic plan for governance must be developed, and a methodology for raising the capital to start new systems is a must if the goal, ever before us, of meeting the mobility needs of the many millions of Americans aging out of their automobiles is to be reached.

Here, in the greater Portland area, the ITN coexists harmoniously with its transit neighbors, the METRO bus service and the (Community

5

Transportation Association member) Regional Transportation Program (RTP), the local paratransit provider. But sometimes there are cool drafts of resentment from paratransit providers in other locations. Wherever the ITN goes, if it goes, it must coexist with its transportation neighbors, both public and private. Heaven knows there is enough unmet need out there for everyone.

The Changing Face of Transportation

Transportation is changing. In many ways, the ITN may be a forerunner of the transportation services of the future. Americans like their transportation fast, instant, unplanned and designed to provide multiple options at any moment. It is possible that Americans like their transportation this way, not because they have grown up and grown old with automobiles, but because automobiles fit the modern sensibility. So do telephones, especially portable cellular phones. So do the internet and e-mail. So do fast food restaurants. If mass transit is to become a desirable consumer choice, one for which non-driving seniors are willing to pay, it must understand the allure of these modern trends, and it must evolve.

The ITN is an effort to build a transportation solution for the common good where all of the paying participants are voluntary seniors, businesses, families and members of the community -- because all of the participants benefit. Structurally and operationally, it is more like a web than a hierarchy or the more traditional linear transportation service.

Together with the development of this risky and ambitious model must go consumer education, a recognition and understanding that transportation is a lifelong need. Outliving one's driving years, in the future, may very well become the norm, not the exception. Financial planners and policy makers can play an important and constructive role in this process by providing instruments and developing incentives for people to think about and plan for the cost of personal transportation beyond the driving years.

Working with others, ITN is attempting to promote and sustain an on-going exploration of personal transportation solutions.

Kathy Freund is the executive director of the Independent Transportation Network (ITN). Earlier this year, she appeared on NBC-TV's Today show to discuss her innovative mobility concepts. The ITN is sponsoring a think-tank conference at the Stone House in Freeport, Maine, October 16 and 17 that will address the theme of federal policies to help older Americans achieve personal transportation solutions through the financial planning necessary to pay for those needs. Call 207.772.2077 for more details.

6

Connect-A-Ride initiated, coordinates and convenes this transportation roundtable which brings together providers who previously had no contact from the private sector, governmental agencies and volunteer agencies in Montgomery County. The providers discuss changes in current services and new services, affordability, gaps and strategies to fill the needs.

TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS ROUND TABLE

ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE(S)
Action In Montgomery	Phyllis Durek
	Thomas Durek
American Red Cross	Rich Wolfe
Area Agency on Aging	Elizabeth Boehner
ASSISST	Sue Dollins
Bethesda HELP	Sybil Silver
Brenner Escort Service-Jewish Social Service Agency-	Diane Hays-Earp
City of Gaithersburg/Gaithersburg Senior Center-	Jim Wiltshire
City of Rockville Senior Services	Lorraine Schack
Commission on Aging	Meg Campbell-Kotler
Community Ministries	Sylvia George
Damascus Ecumenical Laymen's Association ,Inc.	Bill Tom
Damascus HELP	Rita Noble
Gaithersburg HELP	Janet Muenz
JCA Connect-A-Ride	Harriet Shapiro
JCA Senior HelpLine	Ellen Greenberg
JCA Transportation	Moti Galil
Montgomery County, Aging & Disability	Elizabeth Binks
M.C. Commission for People with Disabilities	Betsy Luecking
Over 60	Jean Doing
Paratransit, (Metro Access) Montgomery County	John Trumbo
Private Provider – Time To Share	Barbara McGraw
Private Provider - My Runners	Mark Asher
Rockville FISH	Nell Hubbard,
	Marianne Youngwood
SIRC - Seniors Interfaith Resource Center	Barbara Barrett Foster
	Wanda Campbell
Upcounty Services	Nancy Hislop
Winter Growth	Kathi Ridolfi
WUMCO HELP	Jane Stearns